

From Potential Conflict to Co-operation Potential: Water for Peace

Prevention and Resolution of Water-Related
Conflicts in the Context of Integrated Water Resources
Management.

Contribution of the International Hydrological
Programme and Green Cross International
to the World Water Assessment Programme (WWAP).





**The challenges identified
by the Ministerial Conference,
The Hague, March 2000:**

- Meeting basic needs
- Securing the food supply
- Protecting the ecosystems
- Sharing water resources
- Managing risks
- Valuing water
- Governing water wisely

**Additional challenges also adopted
by the WWAP:**

- Improving the knowledge base
- Water for energy
- Water for industry
- Water for cities

Visit these websites:

www.unesco.org/water/wwap/pccp

www.greencrossinternational.net

www.worldwaterforum.org

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Background

In the past hundred years, the world population has tripled while world demand for water has increased seven-fold. The signs of a looming water crisis are evident. Since water is essential to every aspect of life, this crisis affects everything — from health to human rights, the environment to the economy, poverty to politics, culture to conflict. Just as water defies political boundaries and classification, the crisis is also well beyond the scope of any individual country or sector and cannot be dealt with in isolation. The need for integrated, cooperative solutions is particularly urgent in the 261 river basins which are shared by two or more states, in which nearly half the territory and population of the world are located.

The Hague Ministerial Declaration, signed in March 2000, identified seven key challenges for achieving water security (see inside cover). These challenges provide the context for the UN-wide World Water Assessment Programme (WWAP). While *PC→CP: Water for Peace* objectives are relevant to all these challenges, the programme will specifically address the challenge of “shared water resources”.

UNESCO and Green Cross International are contributing to this international initiative by jointly examining the potential for shared water resources to become a catalyst for regional peace and development through dialogue, co-operation and participative management of river basins. A growing number of states are experiencing permanent water stress, yet in most cases, mechanisms and institutions to manage disputes over water resources are either absent or inadequate.

Competition over this precious resource could increasingly become a source of tension — and even conflict — between states and sectors. But history has often shown that the vital nature of freshwater can also be a powerful incentive for co-operation; it can compel stakeholders to reconcile their diverging views, rather than allow opposing interests to escalate into harmful confrontations which could jeopardize water supplies.

UNESCO has launched the project “From Potential Conflict to Co-operation Potential” (PC→CP) to address the challenge of shared water resource management primarily from the point of view of governments, and to develop decision-making and conflict prevention tools for the future. The “Water For Peace” project initiated by Green Cross — developed with the input of civil society in several international basins — aims to enhance the awareness and participation of local authorities and the public in water conflict resolution and integrated management by facilitating more effective dialogue between all stakeholders.

The joint *PC→CP: Water for Peace* programme will address the obstacles, identify the incentives and promote the means to achieving the integrated, equitable and sustainable management needed to make international watercourses natural thoroughfares for stability and sustainable development across the world. The two components of the joint programme are entirely complementary.

By joining forces and mutually supporting each other, UNESCO and Green Cross will reach a wider constituency and forge more effective links between and among governments and local authorities, the private sector, academics and scientists, and civil society in the search for ways to move from Potential Conflict to Co-operation Potential, and to encourage shared Water to become an avenue for Peace.

Scope

The *PC→CP: Water for Peace* programme will be guided by the principal goals of UNESCO and Green Cross: to nurture the idea of peace in human minds; and to prevent and resolve conflicts arising from environmental degradation, mismanagement and injustice.

In the first phase (2001-2003), *PC→CP: Water for Peace* will give priority to water problems which are international in nature and which have the potential to cause tension or even open conflict between sovereign states.

The programme will seek to answer two questions: What is preventing the political will, active public participation, empowered institutions and investments needed to avoid conflicts and achieve co-operative basin management? How can these obstacles and conflicts be overcome?

The goal of the programme, in accordance with the mandate of WWAP, is to foster co-operation between nations. All the activities of the programme were conceived on the basis of the fact that, since shared water resources can be a source of

conflict between competing users, it is important that their joint management be strengthened and facilitated so that they may instead be a means of co-operation. Thus the programme aims to demonstrate that even a situation with undeniable potential for conflict can be transformed into a situation where co-operation potential can emerge. The programme's thematic focus is on this very transition — from Potential Conflict (PC) to Co-operation Potential (CP).

Target Groups

The priority target groups of the PC→CP programme component are institutions and individuals that manage shared water resources. These include governments, donor and funding agencies, educators at all levels, as well as the professional staff of water management institutions, including current and future decision-makers.

The activities of the Water for Peace programme component will be directed at finding practical solutions at the local level which can contribute to solving wider transboundary problems. Water for Peace will target local authorities, parliamentarians, community and local user associations and the private sector in order to identify problems, raise awareness and encourage meaningful co-operation. This component will also help ensure that civil society and local-level actors fully understand and have a proactive role in the political process as basin-wide principles, policies, projects and mechanisms for integrated water management are developed.

Together, *PC→CP: Water for Peace* will provide a valuable channel of communication, joint analysis and transparency between governments, the scientific sector, local people and non-governmental organizations, essential to the task of finding mutually beneficial solutions to potential and actual water conflicts. *PC→CP: Water for Peace* is essentially a human and institutional capacity-building and information programme.

Purpose

The primary purpose of the programme is to promote peace in the use of transboundary watercourses by addressing conflicts and fostering co-operation among states and stakeholders. The ultimate goal is to facilitate integrated management of shared water resources for the benefit of all parties.

PC→CP component has five main operational objectives:

- Defining and surveying conflicts in water resources management;
- Monitoring indicators of potential conflicts (PC) and co-operation potential (CP);
- Developing educational material targeting all respective levels;
- Providing decision-support tools, by indicating how best to transform PC into CP;
- Disseminating results and best practices.

PC→CP aims to help parties involved in potential water conflicts to negotiate their way towards co-operation. It will analyze historical experiences and review existing legal, negotiation and systems analysis tools and their ability to solve water-related conflicts. The project will illustrate case studies of successful co-operation, develop methods and mechanisms for “facilitating” open discussions, and provide stakeholders and decision-makers with educational material.

PC→CP’s role is to help water resources management authorities to:

Tip the balance in favor of Co-operation Potential away from Potential Conflict.

The Water for Peace objectives are to:

- Identify obstacles to and incentives for co-operative basin-wide water resources management in six international basins;
- Increase political and public awareness and understanding of the issues of integrated international water management, conflict prevention and sharing the benefits of co-operation;
- Develop a multinational sense of responsibility among the peoples of the six regions towards combating their water problems, in turn leading to more active participation;
- Strengthen dialogue between parties, particularly national and local government, civil society and private sectors;
- Prevent new conflicts arising out of changing circumstances.

Water has the potential to move millions of people — let it move them in the direction of Peace.

Activities & Outputs

The PC→CP component activities will develop along three major tracks:

– **The disciplinary track** will investigate the professional approaches as well as the scientific background to conflict management, water-related negotiations and co-operation building techniques and methods. The disciplinary analysis will develop along the following four main axes:

- The History and Future of Shared Water Resources;
- The role of law and institutions in the transition from PC to CP;
- The Systems Analysis Techniques;
- The Negotiation/Mediation/Facilitation Techniques.

– **The case-study track** will survey and consider a selection of real-world water conflicts, in order to draw lessons on both the root causes of such conflicts and the successful use of co-operation in shared water resources management. In line with the philosophy of PC→CP, the case studies selected are examples of good practices, and rely on existing and evolving institutional mechanisms which facilitate co-operation. Case studies envisaged for the 2001-2002 period will include the following river basins: Rhine, Aral Sea, Limpopo/Incomati; Mekong, Jordan, Danube, Columbia, and the Nile. Additional, less intensive Desk Studies will also be presented. The most relevant output will be the presentation of lessons learned from these important cases.

– **The educational track** will concentrate on developing skills for successful management of shared resources at all levels — from professionals to decision makers — through training and knowledge transfer. The main expected outputs of this track include: an operational postgraduate course module on Conflict

Prevention, Diplomacy and Co-operation in International Water Resources; an operational course module on Conflict Prevention and Co-operation in International River Basin Management; a Professional/Master's certificate in transboundary water management; and an educational module on participation, conflict management and consensus building for mid-level water resources managers and senior executives.

At a later stage, these outputs will be enhanced by the findings of the other PC→CP and Water for Peace activities.

The Water for Peace framework will be concentrated on six locally managed transboundary river basin sub-projects in the Danube, the Jordan, the Okavango, the La Plata, the Volga and the Volta basins. These basins were selected on the basis of three common factors:

1. they are the life-blood of their regions — environmentally, economically and culturally;
2. their populations all suffer from the lack of effective co-operation between the states and people who share them, and contain potential and actual areas of conflict as a result;
3. their integrated management is a potential source of great benefit to all the people in the region, in terms of political stability, economic development and environmental protection.

Examples of the locally-identified activities to be implemented in one or all of the six basins can be divided into four inter-related aspects:

- **Political:** informing local authorities; transmitting views of the public to riparian governments and investors; hydro political analysis and recommendations; and development of basin principles.

- **Legal:** outlining legal agreements and drafting and proposal of new water legislation in the respective river basins.
- **Institutional & Technical:** creating permanent fora for dialogue; development and application of decision support systems; initiating appropriate public-private partnerships and promoting responsible investment.
- **Public Outreach:** increasing public awareness in the basins with workshops, seminars, public hearings, joint training projects, questionnaires, documentary film making, and websites.

Local-level pilot projects will also be initiated/implemented to demonstrate good practices in transboundary water management and the benefits to be gained through co-operation and communication.

The key to both components of the *PC→CP: Water for Peace* programme is to encourage a shift in perceptions from seeing water as a source of competition and even conflict, to the realization that everyone stands to gain from co-operation. What is missing is often the first step: the establishment of relations among water experts and policy-makers from the different riparian states and regions; the awareness of the public and local decision makers; the existence of mutually accepted and equitable agreements and treaties; and the setting up of joint institutions and mechanisms.

Green Cross and UNESCO will co-chair a session of the Virtual Water Forum entitled “*From Potential Conflict to Co-operation Potential: Water for Peace*”. This moderated virtual discussion will influence preparations for the Third World Water Forum

to take place in Japan in March 2003, during the International Year of Freshwater. This event will be the most important international milestone for the *PC→CP: Water for Peace* programme.

(Visit the Virtual Water Forum at www.worldwaterforum.org)

PC→CP: Water for Peace Spirit

Co-operation over water can be seen as an opportunity for some, and as the only possible salvation from severe water crises and even conflict for others.

PC→CP: Water for Peace intends to move forward from *Vision to Action* in water conflict prevention by combining innovative analysis and research with practical application. The joint initiative will make an important contribution to both the World Water Assessment Programme and the Third World Water Forum, and inspire greater co-operation in the sharing of water resources around the world.

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Graphic design and layout:

Atelier Takavoir – Paris

Printed by: CL2

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Printed in France

on chlorine-free paper



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